

A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR STUDIES OF GENOCIDE*

by

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INTRODUCTION

This paper is part of a larger work-in-progress. The part we have selected for presentation here deals with our proposals for a definition and a typology of genocide. Our attempt, which has already undergone several reformulations, is by no means a final one; but it does represent our current thinking. In using an historical and comparative approach, our interest is focused on the attempt to identify the social conditions and situations in which genocide can and cannot occur. To identify the relevant parameters is a first step in the prevention of future genocides.

We would like to emphasise at the outset that our interest is in mass-killing in history and particularly that form of mass-killing which has been called "genocide". The recent increase of interest in particular cases of genocide is producing a flood of publications, but without a comparative conceptual framework these studies will remain unintegrated and isolated fragments of knowledge contributing little to our understanding of the genocidal process.

THE DEFINITION OF GENOCIDE

The following definition is deliberately restrictive. We have rejected the UN definition, as well as others proposed, because we want to confine our field of study to extreme cases. Thus, we hope that the term ethnocide will come into wider use for those cases where a group disappears without any actual killing. The suppression of a culture, a language, a religion, etc., is a phenomenon that is analytically different from the physical extermination of a group.

We have considered the utility of coining a new term and have rejected this possibility partly because we have not been able to think of an adequate alternate term and partly because the term genocide is by now so widely accepted. For the purposes of our research we define Genocide as:

a form of one-sided mass killing of a defenceless group (or category) of people in which a state or other authority intends to destroy a racial, religious, ethnic, political, social, or economic group, as that group and membership in it are defined by the perpetrator.

The terms of this definition require some comment in order to avoid misinterpretation. Thus, we start with a form of one-sided killing because we want to emphasize that there are many forms of mass killings and that we are proposing to deal with only one of them. We emphasize one-sided to indicate that we are dealing with cases in which there is no reciprocity; while the perpetrator intends to wipe out the victim group, the latter have no such plans. The term mass killing is meant to denote those cases where all of the members of a group were labelled as victims, notwithstanding the fact that historically the extermination of 100% of the victim group is very rare. A distinction must be made here between the intent to destroy all of the members of a victim group and the empirical methods by which this may be achieved. We mean to exclude ^{from} ~~for~~ consideration here those cases of mass killing, massacres, riots, etc. that had a lesser aim - no matter how objectionable such cases were.

The qualification of a group as defenceless is essential in

order to exclude from our analysis the casualties of war, whether they are military or civilian. When countries are at war, neither side is defenceless. Although individually the civilians may be defenceless, they are part of the group or nation that is at war. In our analysis, it is the group rather than the individual that is the unit of analysis, because we are concerned with the behaviour of groups rather than individuals. It will be noted that in our case materials we have included cases of genocide that occurred during or after a war. These are not to be interpreted as exceptions because they do not concern the victims of combat. The genocide of the Armenians occurred during World War I, that of the Gypsies and Jews during World War II; but in neither case were the victims killed as a result of warfare. Similarly, when we include the victims of the Assyrians, the Mongols, and the Romans in Carthage, we are not dealing with war casualties, but with the killing of the entire population after the opposing armies had already been defeated.

A further implication of defenceless is that the victim group has no organized military machinery that might be opposed to that of the perpetrator. Even in those cases where victims engaged in attempts ~~in attempts~~ to oppose the power of the perpetrators, the very ^ehoplessness of such attempts underscores the defencelessness of the victim group. Such isolated attempts to oppose the perpetrator as the Warsaw Ghetto uprising or the defence of Van serve more to assert the solidarity of the victims than to defeat the perpetrator.

The term group, in our usage, may present some difficulties.

We realize that the culturally defined meaning of a group and group membership was quite different in antiquity and throughout history before the rise of nationalism. In ancient times, the victims of genocide, as we have defined it, were likely to be the residents of a city-state in conflict with a rival power. Whole races, cultures, religions, or ethnic groups were generally not singled out for killing. Indeed, these concepts hardly existed in the ancient world. Thus, even if the Romans killed the residents of the city of Carthage after the fall of that city in 146 B.C. they did not also seek the elimination of the Phoenicians who had founded and peopled Carthage. The Romans defined the residents of Carthage as the members of a group, recognizing that Carthage had long before become independent of Phoenicia. Nor did the Romans try to kill Carthaginians living in Numidia and other nearby states on the grounds that they were Carthaginians and must die. Those Carthaginians living in the hinterland were spared because they were not viewed as guilty of rebellion or as likely rivals for power once the city of Carthage and most of its residents had been destroyed. What matters in our definition of genocide is the concept of the group used by the perpetrator.

Another difficulty may arise when the definition of the perpetrator does not agree with conventional usage. In many cases, the victim group is a real one, in the sense that it is defined by generally agreed upon criteria of the culture of the time. But, in keeping with W.I. Thomas' famous dictum that if people define a situation as real it is real in its consequences, a group may be any collectivity of people that is so defined by the perpetrator of a genocide. (A more detailed discussion of

this point will be found below in the elaboration of our typology.)

To the extent that a victim group (or category) of people has been targetted by the perpetrator, it is of crucial importance to the victims whether membership has been defined by the perpetrator as voluntary or as ascribed. Thus, individual Armenians could have saved themselves by conversion to Islam, while the Nazis defined Jews in racial laws that left no room for individual decisions to opt out.

A further difficulty may arise from our inclusion of economic, political, and social groups because the various definitional criteria for delimiting a group may overlap. Thus, a political elite may include members of several ethnic groups, or an ethnic group may include several economic groups. This difficulty in our definition of group is quite deliberate because we do want to include as genocide those cases where, for instance, an intellectual elite is eliminated - even though it may represent only a small part of its ethnic group.

Genocides are always performed by a state or other authority. In the twentieth century, the perpetrator is almost always the state because authority and power are highly centralized and the modern means of communication are so efficient that such centralization can be effectively imposed. The addition of or other authority was found necessary to deal with some cases where the perpetrator was a local authority other than the state.

Finally, a word about intent. The inclusion of the

criterion of intent is common to most of the definitions found in the literature. It is essential in order to exclude those cases where the outcome was neither planned nor predicted. It thus excludes not only natural disasters, but also those mass deaths that were the result of some human action that did not have this intent; eg: the spread of diseases as a result of migration.

As we said above, our definition of genocide is deliberately restrictive in order to facilitate analysis. It excludes all cases that clearly do not fit our definition. A problem that remains to be dealt with concerns those actual cases that fit part of our definition, but not all of its restrictions. What do we do with those cases of 'one-sided mass killing of a defenceless group' where there was no intent to destroy the entire group? How do we deal with cases where there was an intent to destroy a group that was in fact destroyed though only a small part of it was actually killed?

Since we suspect that many such cases are analytically instructive, we do not think that we should ignore them entirely, at least not until sufficient research has accumulated to permit a more clear-cut decision. We have resolved this dilemma by including them under the label of genocidal massacres. It should, however, be clearly understood that this is not a category designed to allow the inclusion of every case of massacre or communal violence. The cases of genocidal massacre should fit our definition in several of its dimensions.

The term genocidal massacre will also be applied to a number of cases that seem to be a combination of genocide and ethnocide. These are cases where there is no intent to kill the entire

victim group, but where its disappearance is intended. In these cases, a part of the victim group will be killed in order to terrorize the remainder into giving up their separate identity and/or their opposition to the perpetrator group.

Above we have defined genocide because we assume that it is a definable form of human behaviour. But it must be remembered that the very term was coined only in the middle of the twentieth century. This raises questions about the applicability of the term to earlier periods of history, and about the judgemental and moral loadings that have become attached to it.

There seems to be no problem in applying the term to those phenomena that seem to fit the definition - assuming the reliability of the evidence - no matter when these phenomena occurred. A more serious problem is raised by the moral loading attached to the term. Western liberalism, as it has developed since the Enlightenment, raises the issue of moral relativism in historical and comparative studies. Thus, we take it for granted today that we are all against genocide whenever and wherever it occurred. But this obscures our knowledge of how it was perceived by contemporaries. In some societies, it was perceived as cruel and harsh punishment, even by the standards of the day. In other societies, it was fatalistically accepted as the fate of the losers and the weak. There even were societies in which it was seen - at least by the perpetrators - as the just and justified outcome of previous actions. But since the late Middle Ages, it has increasingly been thought of as inconsistent with the values and attributes of a fully human society. It is this

inconsistency that has resulted until recently in what we have called the collective denial of the prevalence of genocidal events; that is, the ignoring of these events in historical reporting, or their glossing over by the use of vague or ambiguous terminology.

From the perspective of the victims, the most prevalent perception seems to have been a fatalistic acceptance that is hard to understand in our post-Holocaust era with its increasing emphasis on equality and human rights. Our current existential, or even future-oriented, *Zeitgeist* makes it difficult to appreciate the brutishness of values and living conditions and the acceptance of inequality throughout most of human history. Life was short, disease was rampant, and food, clothing and shelter were almost always problematic - even at a minimal level. In many cultures, improvements were not looked for or expected in this life, but rather in the afterlife or in another incarnation. Thus, the terrible things that happened to people were accepted as being in the very nature of life in this 'vale of tears'.

A TYPOLOGY OF GENOCIDE

Throughout our work we have felt it important to have a typology that would allow us to group together those phenomena that could be meaningfully compared. We found that typologies available in the literature were unsatisfactory for a variety of reasons - some of which we discuss elsewhere. We devised several typologies ourselves and discarded them for similar reasons. Our present thinking has resulted in a two-fold typology based on the distinction between empires and nation states. This typology is presented here as a heuristic device; its validity can arise only

from further research. But it seems to us that in the comparative research on genocide a crucial distinction is to be made between perpetrators: those that are empires in the process of establishing themselves or maintaining their hegemony, and those that are nation states in the process of consolidating a new regime. The former victimize their potential subjects, while the latter victimize in the first place their own citizens.

We have classified genocides in terms of those committed (1) in the building and maintaining of empires, and (2) in the implementation of a belief, ideology, or theory. Both types are further subdivided as follows:

(1) Genocides committed in the building and maintaining of empires

- a - in order to eliminate a real or potential threat
- b - in order to facilitate access to wealth
- c - in order to spread terror among real or potential enemies

(2) Genocides committed to implement a belief, ideology, or theory

- a - to eliminate a real group accused of real opposition
- b - to eliminate a pseudo-group accused of pseudo-opposition
- c - to eliminate a real group accused of pseudo-opposition
- d - to eliminate a pseudo-group accused of real opposition

1. Genocides committed in the building and maintaining of empires.

We do not know when the first genocide occurred. It seems

unlikely that early man engaged in genocide during the hunting and gathering stage. While we have no direct evidence, this seems a reasonable assumption because man lived in quite small groups and overall population densities were extremely low. (1 per 10 km² of habitable terrain according to the estimates of McEvedy and Jones, 1978, p. 14).

After the discovery of agriculture, the world divided into nomads and settlers. This marked the start of systematic conflict in the form of food raiding by the nomads. The nomads quickly learned to raid their settled neighbours at harvest time for their food stores; however, they had no interest in exterminating them because they planned to repeat their raids in subsequent years. The settlers may have had much better reason to do away with the nomads, but they had neither the means nor the skills to do so.

1a- in order to eliminate a real or potential threat

As the settlers learned to improve their agricultural techniques and produced significant surpluses, they were able to support cities, rulers, and armies. They accumulated wealth, engaged in significant trade, and began to build empires. With these developments, the scene changed dramatically. Conflicts arose over wealth, trade, and trade routes. Wars were fought over the access to wealth and over the control of transportation networks -- to use a modern term. At first, these conflicts were probably in the nature of brigandry and robbery. Soon they escalated to wars between states. However, these warring peoples soon discovered that their victories were mostly temporary: the

defeated peoples withdrew long enough to rebuild their resources and their armies, and then tried to recoup their losses and to avenge their defeat. This pattern became so common that it soon appeared that the only way to assure a stable future was to eliminate the defeated enemy once and for all. After the battle, the people were killed or sold into slavery and dispersed. This elimination of a potential future THREAT appears to be the reason for the first genocides in history. Genocides seem to have been common throughout antiquity, especially in the Middle East where trade routes between Asia, Africa, and Europe crossed. The Assyrians were expert practitioners; about a number of the peoples whom they vanquished we know little more than their names (Jastrow, 1971). When the empire of the Hittites was destroyed, it was done so efficiently that not even the location of their capital was known until an inspired German archaeologist unearthed it almost by accident in the nineteenth century (Gurney, 1975). Perhaps the best-known example of this type of genocide is the destruction of Carthage (Warmington, 1960). The so-called Punic Wars between Carthage and Rome lasted well over a century (264-146 B.C.) and were fought mostly over the control of the Mediterranean trade and economy. These wars were incredibly costly in terms of material and lives, even by modern standards. After Rome just barely won the Second Punic War (218-201 B.C.), it decided that Carthage had to be eliminated once and for all. Once the Third Punic War (149-146 B.C.) had been won, the city of Carthage was destroyed. The fate of the survivors is not clear. Some were sold into slavery and the rest may have been

massacred. Looking at the available evidence from antiquity, one might even develop a hypothesis that most wars at that time were genocidal in character. Such genocide to eliminate a threat to an empire we consider as type 1a.

The evidence from antiquity is often contradictory, ambiguous, or missing. Such evidence as we have consists almost exclusively of written materials that were produced by the victims or by the perpetrators; in those rare cases where we have accounts from both sides, they tend not to confirm each other's evidence. It may well be that as yet undiscovered evidence will shed new light on how and why entire peoples have disappeared. Such disappearances in themselves are not evidence of genocide because they may have been due to a variety of processes, from migration to assimilation. However, if we should ever develop an archeology of genocide, we may acquire more conclusive proof of what happened to the populations of cities that were destroyed and to whole peoples that have disappeared. One case illustrating such possibilities is the extermination, reported by Iranian historians, of whole populations by the Mongols under Genghis Khan; these reports were thought to be exaggerated because they originated from the victims. They gained renewed credibility, however, when archeologists unearthed the pyramids of skulls that Iranian historians had described (Boyle, 1968).

1b- in order to facilitate access to wealth

This type of genocide, committed for primarily economic reasons, probably also originated in antiquity. People looking for greater wealth than their own territory could provide, found

it in the possession of others. When such wealth was in the form of fertile land and other primary resources, it could not be carried off as loot, but could only be acquired by occupying the land and enslaving and/or exterminating the indigenous population. This type of genocide has continued to occur throughout history up to the present day, when it has often been associated with colonial expansion and the discovery and settlement of new parts of the world. The Tasmanians (Travers, 1968) disappeared in the same way that some of the peoples of the interior of Brazil (Davis, 1977) are disappearing today.

1c- in order to spread terror among real or potential enemies

This type of genocide is a somewhat later invention. To conquer others and to keep them subjugated requires large armies and a permanent investment in a large occupying force. Genghis Khan probably deserves credit for realizing that the creation of TERROR is far more efficient as well as effective (Saunders, 1981). He offered his prospective conquests the choice of submitting or of being exterminated. If they did not submit, the threat was ruthlessly carried out. Although there were never more than about one million Mongols, using these methods, Genghis Khan was able to establish an empire that comprised most of the then known world from China to Central Europe.

These three sub-types of genocide, all related to the building and maintaining of empires, have largely disappeared from history for the simple reason that modern states became so large that it was no longer possible for the victor to extermin-

ate the defeated enemy. They persist, particularly genocides committed to facilitate access to wealth, only in cases where the victim population consists of a relatively small tribe living in relative isolation. In the twentieth century, several such cases have been reported in South America.

There are several things that these three sub-types have in common: they are associated with empires, they are primarily of historical interest, and the victims were either enemies or subject peoples.

2. Genocides committed to implement a belief, ideology, or theory

This type of genocide differs from the first type in that its primary victims are citizens of the perpetrator state rather than aliens; it is also of much more recent origin. The persecution of peoples for their religious beliefs has, of course, been going on for a very long time, although it did not usually result in genocide. Neither did the persecutions of the Inquisition always result in genocide; however, it will be included in the case materials because it invented and perfected methods that are still used to-day in places where people are victimized for their actual or imputed beliefs.

While our first type of genocide was subdivided above according to the dominant motive of the perpetrator, this second type of genocide will be subdivided according to the definitions that the perpetrator imposes on the events. We propose four sub-types based on the distinction between real or pseudo-groups and between real or pseudo-opposition. This may appear to be an

arbitrary distinction on our part, but it is not meant to be so. Whether a group, or an opposition that it is being accused of, are real or not depends on whether they have a reality that can be verified outside the perpetrator's frame of reference. We trust that this distinction will become clear in the discussion of the four sub-types.

One of the things that is different about this type of genocide is its result for the perpetrator: for the first type, it can be argued that genocide produced tangible benefits for the perpetrator state; in the case of the second type, it seems clear that genocide was carried out in spite of tremendous costs to the perpetrator state, costs that can be measured in economic, political, and developmental terms - notwithstanding the fact that a number of individuals may have enriched themselves from the misfortunes of the victims.

2a- to eliminate a real group accused of real opposition

This type includes those cases in which the victim groups as well as what they are accused of are real - real in the sense that even the victims would agree with the perpetrator's definitions (although, of course, not with the actions based on them). This case may be illustrated by the Albigensian Crusade of the fourteenth century which has been widely discussed in the literature because the adherents of this particular heresy were successfully exterminated in the south of France. (Oldenbourg, 1961). There is no question that there was such a group of heretics and that they rejected the dominant interpretation of Christianity and the authority of the papacy.

Other cases that fall into this sub-type are: the Inquisition's persecution of the Maranos and the Moriscos in Spain; the cases of the communists in Indonesia, of the Christians in 17th century Japan, and of the Kulaks in Stalin's Russia.

2b - to eliminate a pseudo-group accused of pseudo-opposition

Here the perpetrator defines a group and accuses it of an opposition when neither exist in fact. What we mean here is that neither the groups, nor what they are accused of, have any reality either in the eyes of the victims, nor in the eyes of the disinterested, scholarly observer. Of course, the discrepancy between the perpetrator's definitions and the verifiable reality has no effect on the outcome.

The first occurrence of this new phenomenon was the Great Witch-Hunt of the late Middle Ages during which thousand of people were burned as witches for conspiring with the devil. This happened in spite of the fact that even at the time there was considerable doubt expressed by many people that there ever existed a league of witches who made a pact with the devil in order to overturn the ascendancy of the Christian God. By our definition, these were cases of genocidal massacres rather than of genocide. However, they are instructive because they marked the first time that a pseudo-opposition gained such prominence. Today we would all agree that there was no group of people that concluded a pact with the devil, that there were no witches' covens flying to meetings with the devil on top of mountains, and that no witch ever had intercourse with

the devil. Neither the groups of witches, nor their conspiracy with the devil, had any existence in reality; yet the horrible consequences of the belief in their existence were real enough. Accused witches were tortured to extract confessions, on the basis of which they were then burned at the stake.

In the twentieth century, belief in the devil seems to have decreased with the growth of the national debt (according to Chernyak, as cited in Lerner, 1981, p. 196). The rising importance of ideologies and theories has, however, produced a revival of pseudo-oppositions that have resulted in much more frequent persecution of pseudo-groups; some of the persecutions have resulted in horrible genocides and genocidal massacres. The major example of this sub-type is Hitler's persecution of the Jews and the Gypsies. The reason we consider them to fall into this sub-type is that the racial legislation passed to define these groups corresponds neither with the victims' own nor with anybody else's definition; and the accusations against them certainly had no reality outside of Nazi theorizing.

2c - to eliminate a real group accused of pseudo-opposition

In this sub-type, we are dealing with cases in which there is no question about the reality of the victim group, but where the opposition it is being accused of is a trumped-up charge that rationalizes a hidden agenda. The classic case here is that of the Knights of the Temple, an order that was at the beginning of the 14th century accused of heresy and abolished. Again, we are dealing here with a case that does not qualify as a genocide because only in France were a significant number of their members

killed. As in other cases of heresy, confessions were extracted by torture; the few who were able to resist such torture were condemned as unrepentant heretics, and those who retracted their extorted confessions were condemned as relapsed heretics.

Other cases that fit into this sub-type are the Armenians who were accused of collaborating with the enemies of the state during World War I, an accusation that was true of only a small and uninfluential minority among them. Nonetheless, this accusation was used to purge Armenians from Turkish society. Similarly, Stalin's purge of the nationalities dealt with real groups that were accused of collaboration with the enemies of the state, an accusation that was true, if at all, of only small minorities among them - hardly an accusation that would justify the persecution of a whole nationality group.

2d - to eliminate a pseudo-group accused of real opposition

This sub-type may at first glance seem a logical impossibility, but that is not the case. It is quite possible for a state to become aware of a real opposition without being able to identify the participants in it. In such a case, a pseudo-group may be accused - analogous to what we usually call scape-goating. One case that probably fits this description is the persecution by Stalin of what were called 'wreckers' and 'enemies of the people'. If we assume that Stalin perceived evidence of an opposition that he was unable to identify with a particular group, then we may consider this a case of a real opposition being blamed on a pseudo-group. We can identify such

groups only because they became the victims of persecution and genocide. An additional reason for considering this case as one of genocide within our definition is that the accusations of guilt were generalized to include the victims' families and friends. However, we readily concede that this is a case that requires a good deal more research and analysis before we can be sure that it really is representative of this sub-type.

If it is difficult in many cases to establish what actually happened, it is even more difficult to establish what were the intentions of the perpetrators. Only in some cases did they themselves announce their aims and their motives. Hervé Savon (1972, pp. 26-27) has argued that intent is of proper concern to the moralist and to the jurist, but not to the scholar. In his view, the scientist should try to establish what social structures and social processes lead inevitably to genocide and in what situations. While we agree with this goal of research, we do not see how such processes can be examined while ignoring the intentions of the actors. As most definitions of genocide now recognize, intent is part of the essence of genocide. This inclusion of intent makes our task infinitely more complex because we shall have to impute intent where the stated intent served polemical ends and was meant to distract attention from the real objective. A further reason for including intent in the analysis of structures and processes is a theoretical consideration that was apparently ignored by Hervé Savon: the effects of social structures are never fully deterministic on the actors; their interests and their intentions can motivate them to

counteract such anticipated effects, to ignore them, or to reinforce them. Therefore, we consider intent a crucial part of the definition, no matter how problematic it may be in other respects.

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